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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attorney General to Honor Youth Tobacco Inspectors

(Phoenix, Ariz. – May 18, 2004) Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard will honor youth tobacco inspectors at a ceremony on May 21st honoring the volunteer hours they provide to the statewide inspections program. This inspection program is used to determine if Arizona's retailers are selling tobacco products to people under 18 years old.

The Attorney General's Office recently increased its compliance inspections conducted throughout the state. This year the Attorney General's office has more than doubled its investigations from 257 in 2003, to 569 investigations since January 1, 2004.

"I'm committed to reducing youth tobacco use in Arizona," Goddard said. "This new round of inspections is important because retailers will know that I'm serious about not selling tobacco products to minors. It is unacceptable, and it's unlawful. Anyone who sells tobacco products to minors will be subject to prosecution."

Arizona law prohibits the sale or furnishing of tobacco products to people under 18 years old, and prohibits people under 18 from purchasing tobacco products. Statistics reveal that about 80 percent of adult smokers begin before the age 18, and every day, nearly 4,000 young people under age 18 try their first cigarette. In Arizona, approximately 18.9 percent of high school students say they smoke.

The Attorney General's Office uses the assistance of youth volunteers to work undercover with its agents. Since January of 2003, youth volunteers have dedicated over 400 hours to the program, and have received the Attorney General's public service ribbon for exceptional service.

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